



5 MINUTES WITH:

Rabbi Aryeh Sufrin

Three Jewish women were among the 52 victims of the terrorist attacks in Central London ten years ago this week. One of the survivors was Rabbi Aryeh Sufrin who was travelling in a Tube train carriage behind one which exploded near Liverpool Street Station. He now reflects on those events.

7/7 TEN YEARS ON



RABBI REFLECTS ON
ESCAPE FROM BOMB
CARNAGE

We published your impressions about what happened to you on 7/7 a week later. Were you traumatised by your "brush with death"?

Traumatised is an interesting dilemma, what does it actually mean? During the event you are thrown into an emotion within a life's experience which you only read about and never expect to be a part of it.

Even RL in the most tragic of circumstances in Eretz Yisroel, we sigh, we are maybe sad for a while, but we then get on with our lives. Sadly we are somewhat removed.

I was then in the midst of it. It's a

life changing experience; one just does not know how we will react, how we will cope. Will it affect me in a way that will change me? How will my relationship change with all my loved ones? And again, in my life's mission of working with other people, supporting them in their time of need.

Are you still haunted by it all these years later?

BH my emunah is very strong and I manage my life well, but I have learned that it is so very important to deal with the issues that we are faced with and address them. This may include medical or emotional support. I have come to learn that it is not a weakness to seek support and help, but it is imperative to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

I do have occasions, rare as they are, BH, that take me back to that day, and my physical health was affected permanently in some small way, but I have also learned that Hashem sends us *nisyonos* – tests — and the rest is up to us as to how we are going to deal with them.

How has your perspective on what happened to you then changed in the years since?

At the moment when you believe your time in this world is over, you start making deals with Hashem - I was no different then . I began

negotiating with Hashem "I will work harder" but how much more can one human being do beyond eighteen hours a day, seven days a week?

So I thought again: "maybe I am working 18 hours a day but what am I actually accomplishing?"

I decided then that perhaps I had forgotten my *tachlis*! I am supposed to help people, but I have become so busy. My *mosod* has grown in its demands. Am I now too big to be able to respond to those who can still use my input?

I therefore resolved that with Hashem's help every Friday I am going to spend an hour or two on the phone and communicate with individuals who are lonely, stuck at home, widows and widowers, the lonely and infirm, with no ulterior motive, just to see how they are.

Boruch Hashem, I have now done this for 10 years and my list has grown. Whether I am in this country or not I fulfil my deal with Hashem in this way.

You spoke in 2005 about the positive impact of tragedy in uniting people from disparate backgrounds. Has 7/7 had a long-term positive result in the way we behave as Anglo-Jewry?

In addition to my role as Rov and shliach in a very successful Chabad House, which now has four Chabad families in the area, and working on opening our third Chabad House in Essex, I have dedicated my life

to helping people in need, and specifically in the area of addiction. This has also led others in need to turn to me about aspects of relationships and Sholom Bayis from the most Orthodox of circles.

I have to ask myself every day: what was my *zechus* to be saved on that awful day? Why was I saved and 52 other people were sadly killed and tens of others injured, many in life-changing ways? I feel that every day I have to search for the answer to this dilemma, and every day that Hashem gives me, I'll continue to ask myself the same question and hopefully satisfy Hashem with my answer, not in theory though, but *hamaseh hu ho'ikar* – the deed is the most important thing."

If in the process I can inspire others to do something more for another person - then Boruch Hashem we have learned something from that terrible day.

If someone gave you responsibility for making the world a safer place what would you do?

Just think and act in a way that takes us out of our own comfort zone, what a better world we would be living in!

It's the purpose of each and every one of Klal Yisroel in this world, May Hashem give us the *koach* to achieve this great privilege, which at the same time is an immense responsibility.

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